American History and Culture Through Film

2011-2012

Mr. Ross

[bradross@dadeschools.net](mailto:bradross@dadeschools.net)

**Academic Mission: The primary goal of this program is to promote critical thinking within the framework of a liberal arts curriculum that emphasizes the interaction between history and culture. To meet this goal, the program offers small, seminar-style classes that foster analytical thought through reading, discussion, and written expression and that require active and consistent student participation.**

**Course Description: This course examines American history, focusing on American culture and society. The primary text for this course is Hollywood’s America: U.S. History through its Films. You will view American films such as City Lights, Casablanca, The Graduate, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Wall Street, American Beauty, and Crash. You will critically analyze how American cultural and social conflicts are portrayed and worked out in popular films. By watching, discussing, and writing about these films, you will examine how motion pictures create a window into modern American culture and society. You will learn how to read American films as cultural texts that help us better understand history and culture.**

**Course Objective: My objectives are threefold. Firstly, you will understand the major historical events and cultural issues in America history. Secondly, you will understand how to read films as cultural texts that open up a window into American history. And, thirdly, you will learn how to use popular American films to understand competing perspectives on American history, culture, and society.**

**Films in this class: Era/Topic**

***1776/ The Patriot* American Revolution**

**Gangs of New York Antebellum Period**

**Glory Civil War**

**Gone with the Wind Reconstruction**

**Dances with Wolves/Tombstone American Frontier**

**Untouchables/The Godfather Immigrant Experience/1920’s**

**Grapes of Wrath The Depression Era**

**Casablanca American Neutrality/WWII**

**Sweetland Post WWII Attitudes**

**American Graffiti 1950’s**

**Good Night and Good Luck McCarthy Era**

**Thirteen Days/JFK 1960’s**

**Apocalypse Now Vietnam War Era**

**The Graduate 60’s free spirit**

**One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest 1970’s**

**Malcolm X Civil Right Movement**

**All the President’s Men Nixon Era**

**Wall Street 1980’s**

**Footloose 1980’s**

**Do the Right Thing 1990’s**

**American History X 1990’s**

**Fight Club/ American Beauty 2000’s**

**Crash/Babel Modern**

**Lions for Lambs/Hotel Rwanda Modern**

**Grading: Grades will be based on class participation (20%), film reviews (35%), two take-home Critiques (20% each), and tests (25%). I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes and assignments in class. Content will count most heavily in all written work, but grammar, spelling, and style will also affect your grade.**

**Course grades will be defined in these terms:**

**A--Excellent--( Thoughtful, coherent, insightful, contributes)**

**B--Good--( Knows material well, lacks depth, not outstanding)**

**C--Fair--( Adequate, average, passing, little participation)**

**D--Poor--( Little understanding, little effort, incoherent)**

**F--Fail--( No evidence of understanding, no work, no learning)**

**Film Reviews: Out of the 25 movies we see this semester, students will be required to write 10 film reviews (2-3 pages each). As long as your film reviews are turned in at the time they were first due, you will be allowed to revise your reviews throughout the entire semester for a higher grade. Film reviews will be graded on how well you critically analyze how a movie works and how it exemplifies larger cultural and social issues in American history and society. You are required to write at least one film review before the first**

**Test.**